

# NEWSLETTER MARCH

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Dear clients,

In this newsletter you can read about our vaccination cards, and the very interesting visit of Dr Morné de la Rey. He is a South-African animal reproduction specialist who visited Namibia to examine rhino cows that have never calved before. We give you a quick reminder of our article on wildebeest and Malignant Catarrhal Fever (snotsiekte) in cattle and we want to say a little thank you to all those involved in the Klawerberg & Vriende Veiling. We hope you enjoy the newsletter! Kind regards, the Wildlife Vets Namibia team.

## VACCINATION CARDS

Did you know that we have our very own vaccination cards? We have two kinds; one for pets, as shown on the right by Holly, and one for wildlife, as shown (and almost eaten...) by Bokkie!

On the pet vaccination card there is plenty of space to write down all the vaccinations and deworming that were given, chip- and sterilization info and of course info about the animal and the owner. You can also find the vaccination schedule of dogs, cats and horses on the back of the card.

On the vaccination card for wildlife there is space for your info, the animal's info, the vaccinations that have been given and treatments (e.g. immobilizations, parasite control etc.) that were done.

Vaccinations are important and especially your pet's vaccinations should be kept up to date. By vaccinating your pets, you reduce the chance of them contracting serious diseases such as distemper and parvo (dogs), feline aids etc. Some of the diseases we vaccinate animals against can also infect humans – rabies is a prime example! So by vaccinating your pets you indirectly also protect yourself and your family. Thereby, vaccinations are cost-effective in the long run, it will be much more expensive to treat an animal than to give them yearly vaccines.

The recommended vaccination programs for pets are:

Dogs		Cats	
<b>6 – 8 weeks:</b>	5 in 1 vaccine	<b>8 weeks:</b>	'Snuffles', Panleucopania and Leukemia vaccine
<b>10 – 12 weeks:</b>	5 in 1 vaccine	<b>12 weeks:</b>	'Snuffles', Panleucopania, Leukemia vaccine and rabies
<b>14 – 16 weeks:</b>	5 in 1 vaccine + rabies	<b>Annual booster:</b>	All the above
<b>Annual booster:</b>	5 in 1 vaccine + rabies		

Please do let us know in advance if we should bring pet vaccinations, as we do not always carry this around.

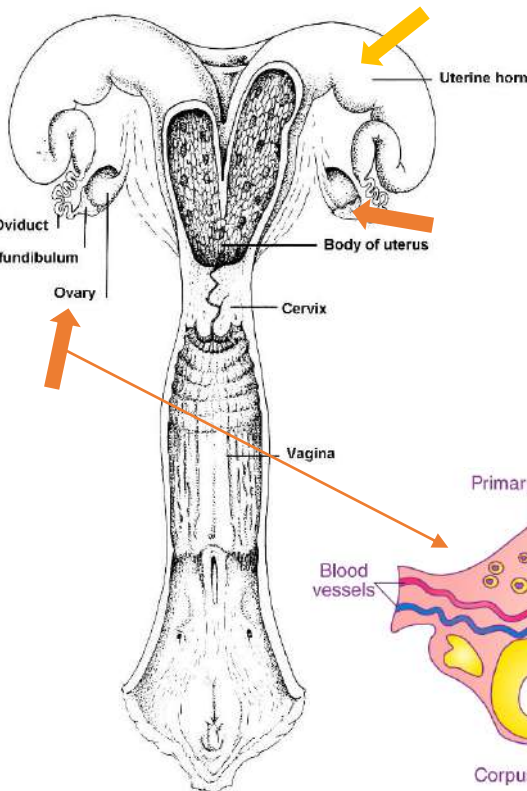
There are a couple of diseases that can have a devastating effect in wildlife e.g., anthrax, rabies, various Clostridial diseases such as botulism, enterotoxemia (bloed derm/rooi derm), black quarter (spons siekte) etc. These can affect all species but vaccination of rhinos and other valuable/expensive game is highly recommended. We will gladly provide you with vaccination guidelines tailored to your needs.



*Our vaccination cards shown by our models Holly and Bokkie!*

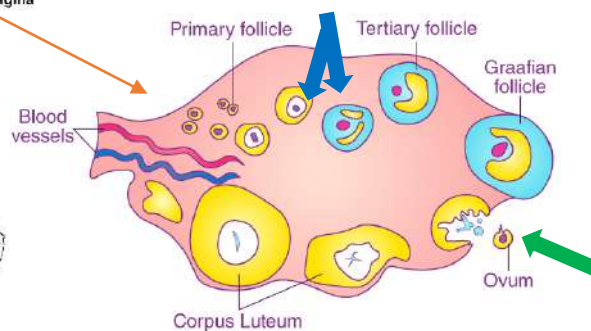
## VISIT DR MORNÉ DE LA REY – RHINO REPRODUCTION

A few weeks ago Dr Morné de la Rey, a leading vet in the field of animal reproduction, came to Namibia for a follow-up visit. In July 2023 he visited some farms with rhinos that have not calved before, even though they were of reproductive age and they walk with one or more bulls. For the first time in Namibia, he performed a special procedure to get the rhinos cows on heat, and thus pregnant (more about this later). Now it was high time to examine the cows he treated and check if they were pregnant. We also examined new rhinos. Since we will be using some terms you might have heard last during your biology classes (or hopefully you still remember them from our [July '23 newsletter](#) 😊), a quick recap on reproduction!



A rhino cow has two **ovaries**. The main function of the ovaries is to *produce eggs (ova)*. The eggs are controlled by a complex interaction of several hormones (Follicle Stimulating Hormone (FSH), Luteinizing Hormone (LH), Progesterone and Oestrogen), and are produced according to a cycle – *the oestrous cycle*. During this cycle, the reproductive tract is prepared for *oestrus* (in lay man's terms, 'on heat' – the period that the female accepts the male) and *ovulation* – the egg release.

The eggs develop and mature in a small fluid-filled sac called a **follicle**, which are found throughout the *ovaries*. During the *oestrous cycle*, follicular cells develop, and an egg is prepared to be released.



During ovulation, the follicle ruptures, and the **egg (ovum) is released**. If the egg is fertilized by sperm from the male, it begins developing in the **uterus** and forms a calf. If not, the cycle starts again.

In order to become pregnant, a rhino cow needs to come into the *oestrous cycle* (she needs to come on heat) and then the eggs need to be released (ovulate). Next, of course, the cow needs a handsome, and above all, fertile rhino bull!

*The black and white picture shows a uterus of a cow (unfortunately we don't have such nice diagrams of rhinos, who are a bit different, but just to give you an idea). The orange arrows indicate the location of the ovaries © Vetoquinol Repro360. The coloured picture gives a more detailed view of the ovary and the follicles. © BYJU'S*

Sometimes it happens that rhino fails to become pregnant:

- 🐾 There might be a medical issue with either the bull or the cow.
- 🐾 When a bull and a cow walk alone (without other rhinos), the bull sometimes just becomes too lazy to breed.
- 🐾 Sometimes it happens that rhinos don't come into a proper cycle. The hormones don't reach adequate levels, and the body does not get prepared to release an egg, or to become pregnant.
  - This can happen to any animal, and any human.
  - This phenomenon is sometimes seen in poaching survivors, that went through a traumatic experience. Their system basically down regulates.
  - It is also seen in rhino orphans that grow up together. They see their mates as siblings, and don't get into the reproduction cycle.

In such cases, Rhino Repro comes to the rescue!

In 2017 Dr de la Rey founded [Rhino Repro](#), a non-profit organization aiming to ensure the survival of the white and black rhino by assisting the species with ground-breaking Assisted Reproductive Techniques (ART). These techniques involve the manipulation of sperm, eggs (ova) and embryos in vitro (in the lab, literal meaning 'in the glass') with the goal of producing a pregnancy. These techniques might raise some questions – should we not let nature take its course?

Normally we would say yes, nature should do its own thing. However, due to ongoing pressure on nature and wildlife (e.g., poaching, habitat loss) many species are driven towards extinction. When population numbers are declining, genetic diversity becomes a major problem. ART's can be used to boost population numbers and ensure genetic diversity within species, thus playing an important role in the conservation of endangered species. The rhino is a prominent example as numbers are declining due to poaching. Subsequently, due to the risk of being poached, many reserves and farms do not want rhinos anymore. This decreases their possible habitat tremendously. To save a species, it is important that the Assisted Reproductive Techniques, together with biobanks, are perfected now before it is too late.

## 2024 VISITS

On the one farm where Dr de la Rey treated a rhino cow before in 2023, it was observed that a bull mated her, so she did not get a follow-up examination. We keep our fingers crossed that she will get pregnant!

On the 1<sup>st</sup> farm we visited this year, a rhino cow, heifer and a bull were present. This was a new farm we did not visit last year, and so far, no calves have been born here. As the one rhino was still quite young, she was not examined for pregnancy. The other rhino cow however was of an age where one would have expected her to already have calved before. She was immobilized, and Dr de la Rey removed all the faeces from the rectum. Then a big ultrasound probe gets inserted into the rectum. It is quite difficult to check for pregnancy in rhinos, and examining the ovaries is far more challenging.

The rhino cow was not pregnant, so Dr de la Rey and his assistant Carla started a procedure called an Ovum Pick-Up (OPU). With a specially designed and adapted extension holding the ultrasound probe with needles, the ovaries and follicles are located. The needles are then inserted into the follicle (remember, throughout the ovaries are several follicles, and in the follicle is the egg), which is then emptied and flushed with saline several times. This procedure is repeated on all the follicles that can be found. The goal of emptying and flushing the follicles is to basically 'reset' the ovaries and the hormones they produce. By emptying the follicles, the ovaries are downregulated, resulting in a subsequent hormone flush. Around 14 to 28 days later the cow should come on heat and will have (depending on the condition of the uterus and if she is mated) a good chance of becoming pregnant.



*On the 1st photo you can see the probe has been inserted into the cow. On the 2nd photo you can see the follicle in the yellow circle. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> photo, you can see the follicle again in the yellow circle, but also a needle (the white line along the orange arrow). All the material inside the follicle is sucked out, and saline is flushed in. © M Bijsterbosch*

Now that the cow was treated, we also checked the rhino bull to see if he is fertile. The bull was immobilized, and a specially made electro-ejaculation probe was inserted rectally to stimulate ejaculation. The technique is basically the same as is used in cattle. Sperm was collected, and is immediately checked under the microscope. The sperm was looking great, so that means the bull is fertile - excellent news! We hope that the cow will come on heat soon, and will be mated by the bull. Rhinos have a long gestation period of about 16 months. Depending on how things go, we might check the cow in a few months' time again to see if she is pregnant.



*Taking sperm of a rhino bull, this was only the 2<sup>nd</sup> time this has been done on a rhino in Namibia! © M. Bijsterbosch*

*Once the sperm is collected, it is immediately checked under the microscope. The sperm looked healthy and was motile! © C. Herbst*

On the next farm Dr de la Rey re-examined the rhino cow we did before in 2023, and another cow. Last time Dr de la Rey checked if the bull was fertile, so we knew he is fertile, but we did not know for sure if he is really doing his thing! The one cow we immobilized was pregnant, good news! At least we know that the bull is working! You can see an image of the calf on the ultrasound. The rhino cow we treated before was not pregnant yet, but her uterus was in great condition and her ovaries were full of follicles. Since it looked so good, it was decided not to treat her again, and she should become pregnant hopefully in the next few months.



*Checking to see if the rhino cow is pregnant, and she was! © Rhino care taker. On the second photo you see an ultrasound image of the pregnant rhino. The black is amniotic fluid; the fluid that surrounds and protects an embryo while it is growing in the uterus. The white what you see inside the black, is part of the rhino calf © U. Tubbesing*

Once again, we had a great and interesting time! We would like to thank Dr de la Rey and Carla for their time and work done, Dr HO for joining us, and of course the rhino owners for their trust in these services! If you have rhinos or other (wildlife) species such as sables that do not get calves, please feel free to contact us. We hope to get Dr de la Rey in again this year and try to pool any work that needs to be done.

# WILDEBEEST AND MALIGNANT CATARRHAL FEVER (SNOTSIEKTE) IN CATTLE

As you might have read in our previous newsletters, we wrote an article about snotsiekte (Malignant Catarrhal Fever – MCF). This article will provide you with the most current information about the status of snotsiekte in Namibia, and the legislation around the 10 m double fence.

We believe the existing regulations should be scrapped or, at the very least, need some serious reviews. They are not only outdated and ineffective, but are also a source of misinformation to the farmers, resulting in many conflict situations between game and cattle ranchers. Alternative, cheaper, ecologically sound and likely more efficient solutions do exist and should be applied.

Since we want to reach as many people as possible, we would appreciate it if you can distribute the article further to cattle farmers as well as game farmers. We also would like to receive info and experiences from you, did you have had any snotsiekte cases on your farm? We love to hear about it! The more information and statistics we can get, the more we are able to learn about this disease.

Baie dankie!

Click [here](#) to read and download the MCF / Snotsiekte article



*A cow with snotsiekte. Did you know that many diseases can be confused with snotsiekte? In our article we show some of these diseases. © CABI*

To all vets, vet (nurse) students, vet nurses, animal health technicians, para-professionals etc.... On **Friday the 12<sup>th</sup> of April**, the Veterinary Association of Namibia (VAN) will organize a CPD evening called ‘**A snotty business – let’s discuss Malignant Catarrhal Fever**’ at the Central Veterinary Lab in Windhoek. In this lecture we will discuss the disease and the Namibian regulations.

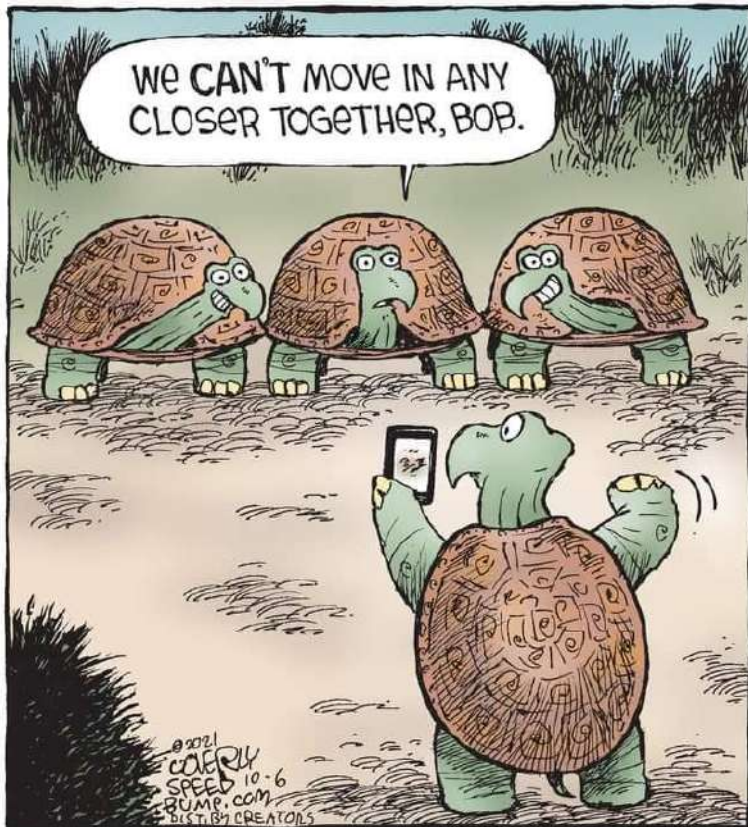
Send us a message and we will send you the registration link, or contact VAN for more information. VAN members: N\$50, non-VAN members: N\$100.

## KLAWERBERG EN VRIENDE VEILING

Since its highly successful premiere in 2023 the Klawerberg and Friends Game Auction has set new standards for game auctions in Namibia. Game of the best genetics available were sold at record prices. Considering the fact that the Namibian/SA border will indefinitely remain closed for game imports from SA, this auction presents the best opportunity for game ranchers to improve their herd genetics. Charl and Minkie du Toit, the enthusiastic drivers behind this auction, promised to make this flagship auction an annual event.

Being a man of his word, Charl, in spite of most of the country being in the grip of a severe drought, held the 2024 Klawerberg and Friends Game Auction on Saturday 16 March. The invited guest sellers (all breeding exceptional quality game) came out in full support and put some of their best animals up for sale. Such dedication and enthusiasm brings Billy Ocean’s hit song to mind: “*When the going gets tough, the tough get going!*”

The auction was attended by many registered buyers as well as enthusiastic supporters and friends. In spite of the drought, prices obtained for the game on offer were good. The auction once again made a huge contribution to the Namibian game industry. The social evenings before and after the auction also facilitated networking between game breeders/farmers, game dealers and wildlife veterinarians, an underappreciated opportunity. Wildlife Vets Namibia would like to thank Charl and Minkie du Toit for their perseverance in holding this auction, and we thank all sellers on making outstanding breeding animals available. Congratulations to the buyers with their top-quality purchased animals, we are certain they will bring your herds to a higher level!



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